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ABSTRACT

This report discusses theories that contribute to an understanding of how schools and families interact. Shortcomings of these theories are examined, and the essential components of a new theoretical model are presented. Current theoretical perspectives on school-family relations focus on separate, shared, or sequential responsibilities of families and schools. Assumptions of these opposing theories are found in the perspectives and practices of teachers, parents, the teaching profession, and in patterns of family-school relationships. Four events in recent history help explain the movement from theories and practices that stress separation to those that stress partnership and overlap among family and school environments. Many schools now make their classrooms increasingly "family-like" to maximize learning and to improve student attitudes. Such overlap is a crucial component of a proposed theory which integrates useful strands from different theories and requires that research models include the history of, developmental considerations for, and change in family-school relationships. Such an integrated theoretical perspective suggests many new hypotheses for studies of relations and their effects, as well as family-school structures, their processes and effects. Changing theories and variations in school and family practices show that parent involvement is a variable that can be manipulated to increase school effectiveness and improve student success in school. (RH)

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Center for Research On Elementary & Middle Schools

ED348130

Report No. 3

November, 1986

TOWARD AN INTEGRATED THEORY OF SCHOOL AND FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Joyce L. Epstein

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The Center

The mission of the Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools is to produce useful knowledge about how elementary and middle schools can foster growth in students' learning and development, to develop and evaluate practical methods for improving the effectiveness of elementary and middle schools based on existing and new research findings, and to develop and evaluate specific strategies to help schools implement effective research-based school and classroom practices.

The Center conducts its research in three program areas: (1) Elementary Schools, (2) Middle Schools, and (3) School Improvement.

The Elementary School Program

This program works from a strong existing research base to develop, evaluate, and disseminate effective elementary school and classroom practices; synthesizes current knowledge; and analyzes survey and descriptive data to expand the knowledge base in effective elementary education.

The Middle School Program

This program's research links current knowledge about early adolescence as a stage of human development to school organization and classroom policies and practices for effective middle schools. The major task is to establish a research base to identify specific problem areas and promising practices in middle schools that will contribute to effective policy decisions and the development of effective school and classroom practices.

School Improvement Program

This program focuses on improving the organizational performance of schools in adopting and adapting innovations and developing school capacity for change.

This report, which supports research on parent involvement in both the Elementary and Middle School Programs, discusses existing theories that contribute to understanding how schools and families do and don't interact, examines the shortcomings of these theories, and presents the essential components of a new theoretical model to guide research on effective school-family relations.

Abstract

This paper examines theories that seek to explain family and school connections, shows how data from families and schools about teacher practices of parent involvement support or refute the different theoretical perspectives, and integrates useful strands of multiple theories in a new model to explain and guide research on family and school connections and their effects on students, parents, and teachers.

Introduction

This paper addresses three questions:

o What are the theories that explain family and school connections?

o How do our data from families and schools about teacher practices of parent involvement support or refute the different theoretical perspectives?

o Can we integrate useful strands of sociological, psychological, social psychological, organizational, and life course theories in a new model to reflect our best guesses about family and school connections and their effects on students, parents, and teachers.

Theories of Family and School Connections

Currently, three distinct perspectives guide researchers and practitioners in their thinking about family and school relations.

o Separate responsibilities of families and schools. Early sociological theories emphasized the importance of separating the authority of families and schools (Weber, 1947), their responsibilities (Waller 1932), and the importance for student development of particularistic behaviors in families and universalistic behaviors in schools (Parsons, 1959).

o Shared responsibilities of families and schools. Recent sociological, social psychological and ecological theories emphasized the nested characteristics and interrelated behaviors of families and schools (Litwak and Meyer, 1974; Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

o Sequential responsibilities of families and schools. Psychological and psychiatric perspectives on ages, critical stages, and roles of family and school connections emphasize parents' responsibilties for the education of infants and young childhood (Bloom,1964; Freud, 1937; Piaget and Inhelder, 1969), and the schools' responsibilities for education thereafter.

The major perspectives on family-school relations are profoundly different. Assumptions based on the separate responsibilties of institutions stress the inherent incompatibility, competitition, and conflict between families and schools. This perspective assumes that school bureaucracies and family organizations are directed, respectively, by educators and parents whose different goals, roles, and responsibilities are best fulfilled independently. It asserts that the distinct goals of the two institutions are achieved most efficiently and effectively when teachers maintain their professional, univeralistic standards and judgments about the children in their classrooms, and when parents maintain their personal, particularistic standards and judgments about their children at home.

The second perspective, based on shared responsibilities of institutions, stresses the coordination, cooperation, and complementarity of schools and families and encourages communication and

collaboration between the two institutions. This perspective assumes that schools and families share responsibilites for the socialization and education of the child. Teachers and parents are believed to share common goals for their children that are achieved most effectively when teachers and parents work together. These assumptions are based on models of inter-institutional interactions and ecological designs that emphasize the natural, nested, and necessary connections between individuals, groups, and organizations.

The third perspective, based on the sequential responsibilites of institutions, emphasizes the critical stages of parents' and teachers' contributions. This approach is based on the belief that the early years of a child's life are critical for later success, and that by age 5 or 6, when the child enters formal schooling in kindergarten or grade 1, the child's personality and attitudes toward learning are well established. Parents teach their young children needed skills, arrange educational programs and experiences, and are guided or supported by other social and educational agencies (e.g., pediatricians, preschool teachers, the media) to prepare their children for school. At the time of the child's formal entry to school, the teacher assumes the major responsibility for educating children.

Table 1 outlines the three perspectives and illustrates a few research results that support or refute the assumptions underlying the perspectives.

Table 1

Contrasting Perspectives on Family-School Relations
And Examples of Research Evidence

Theory	Assumption	Evidence
Early sociological perspectives.	Families and schools have separate and distinct functions and each institution is particularly effective when the functions do not overlap.	Parent reports did not reflect deep conflict and incompatibility between schools and families. Parents report they have the same goals as teachers for their children. They give teachers higher ratings in interpersonal skills and overall teaching quality when the teacher frequently uses parent involvement in learning activities at home (Epstein, 1986).
Later sociologicial, social psychological, and ecological perspectives.	Institutions are more effective when inter-setting connections are developed -- when valued information, advice, and experiences are shared on a continuing basis among members of two or more settings.	Parents can help teachers help students meet school goals. Research shows that students gain more in reading skills from fall to spring when teachers frequently use parent involvement in learning activities at home (Epstein, 1984a).
"Critical stage" perspectives.	Parents are educators in the early years of the child's life, in infancy, preschool, and early elementary grades. Teachers assume major responsibilities for education when child enters school.	There are dramatic grade level differences in teachers use of parent involvement and in parents' feelings that they can help their children in reading and math activities at home (Becker and Epstein, 1982; Epstein, 1986).

The brief overview in Table 1 is expanded in the next section with discussions of how the assumptions of the main opposing theories are found in the perspectives and practices of teachers, parents, the teaching profession, and in patterns of relationships between families and schools. We look at historical patterns, mechanisms suggested by other theories of behavior that produce family and school relations, respect, authority relations, teachers' practices, and the status of the teaching profession to understand the depth to which assumptions about the separation or overlap of family and school environments are found in social behavior.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTRASTING THEORIES

1. Historical Patterns in Family-School Relations

Historically, there have been important changing patterns in the partnerships between the home and school. In the early 19th century, parents and the community greatly controlled the actions of the schools. The home, church, and school supported the same goals for learning and for the integration of the student into the adult community (Prentice and Houston, 1975). The community, including parents and church representatives, hired and fired the teachers, determined the school calendar, and influenced the curriculum. When the students were not in school, the family and others in the community taught the students important skills and knowledge needed for success in adulthood. This was a time of near-complete overlap in the spheres of influence of the home and school.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, a different pattern of family and school relations emerged. Increasingly, separate responsibilites were formally and informally delegated to the home and the school. The aim was not to create cold or unresponsive schools, nor to build false distinctions between homes and schools. Indeed, at first, in urban areas schools were expected to replace incompetent mothers with competent female teachers (Katz, 1971). It was hoped that the school would be an extended family, especially to children from poor families, where teachers would do for disadvantaged students what "good" mothers did for their children, in terms of building skills and self esteem.

Increasingly, the school began to distance itself from the home by emphasizing the teachers' special knowledge of subject matter and pedagogy. Teachers began to teach subjects that were not familiar to parents and to use methods and approaches that were not part of the parents' experiences. The home was asked to refrain from teaching school subjects at home, to limit their teaching to behaviors and attitudes to prepare children for school, and to teach children about their ethnicity and family origins. These were separate functions from the school's responsibility to teach a common curriculum to children from all ethnic, religious, and social groups. Theoretical perspectives on the importance of the separation of schools and families for organizational efficiency helped to explain and support teachers' practices that differentiated family and school responsibilities.

Over the past two decades, family-school relations again have been revised to reflect an increase in community demands for better schools and for accountability of the schools to the public. Both better-educated parents and less-educated parents who want better education for their children are requesting or requiring schools to keep them informed and involved with their children's education. Recent perspectives on the importance of family and school partnerships for organizational effectiveness help to explain and support teachers' practices that increase collaboration and communication between teachers and parents, and that connect family and school responsibilities for assisting students to succeed at school.

The theoretical and practical emphases on cooperation reflect important changes. First, families have changed. The education of more parents is equal to the education of teachers. More minority group parents are aware of and demanding better education for their children.

Second, schools have changed. There is greater diversity in the populations of students that are served by schools, greater awareness of the problems that different students have learning skills in a fixed time period, and greater awareness of the fact that schools cannot solve all of their educational and financial problems alone. The need for parent involvement and assistance has become more clear as teachers grapple with difficult situations in schools.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTRASTING THEORIES

2. Mechanisms Producing Family-School Relations

In addition to the major theoretical distinctions between separate and overlapping spheres, there are other perspectives that help us to understand the variations in patterns of family and school connections. These include symbolic interactionist theory, reference group theory, and organizational theory. These perspectives direct attention to the mechanisms and purposes of family and school relations. For example, symbolic interactionist and reference group theory help to explain how teachers and parents come to conduct practices reflecting overlapping spheres of family and school influence based on whether they take each other's perspectives, expectations, and actions into account.

Symbolic interactionist theory (Mead, 1934) suggests that self-concept, personality, values, and beliefs are products of our interactions with others. The theory suggests that we learn how others perceive and anticipate our goals and behaviors, then we fashion our behavior to fulfill the expectations of others and to receive their recognition. To the extent this theory guides behavior, it helps to explain the level of teachers' responsiveness to parents and parents' responsiveness to teachers.

If teachers do not interact with parents, they cannot be informed about or understand the parents' expectations for their children and for the teachers. And they cannot shape their teaching behavior to be responsive to those expectations. If parents do not interact

with teachers, they cannot be informed about or understand the schools' expectations for their children. And they cannot shape their behavior to provide useful assistance to their children and to teachers.

Some have suggested that teachers place low priority on interactions with parents because parents do not formally evaluate teachers or affect their professional status. But some teachers emphasize family-school interactions with parents because most parents offer immediate and positive feedback to teachers. These positive evaluations and rewards are more likely to come from parents who are frequently involved by teachers in their children's education (Epstein, 1986).

Reference group theory (Merton, 1968) clarifies the connections between esteem and interaction. A reference group is a collectivity or an individual who is taken into consideration by another group or individual and influences attitudes and behaviors. Although the individuals or groups may interact directly, the influence may also be indirect, as when one group or individual knows and recognizes the importance of the other or admires the positions and actions of the other. If, in planning the children's educational program, a teacher considers the part parents can play, it may be because the teacher views parents as an important reference group. If, in planning their family activities, parents take the teachers' or schools' goals and actions into account, it may be because they consider teachers and schools important reference groups.

These referrals may be more or less complex depending on the degree to which both parents and teachers reciprocate their references. It may be that only the higher status or esteemed group (or individual) influences the behavior of a group (or individual) of lower status. Teachers may take parents into account without parents reciprocating the attention if parents are in strong control over educational politics and policies, as in a well-educated or activist community. In another example, teachers may give consideration to parents' transience in a military school or community, without the parents giving the teachers much thought.

Similarly, parents may consider teachers an important reference group, without the teachers reciprocating the attention. This occurs, for example, when parents help their children on schoolwork even if the teacher has not given them directions about how to help. In another example, parents may defer to highly-esteemed teachers and turn their children's education over to them, without the teachers making any overtures to inform parents of the programs or decisions concerning the child.

Reference group theory may help us understand the sequence of parent-teacher relations from initial one-way, unreciprocated referencing, to two-way, reciprocated referencing. Before ambitious, purposeful, frequent, and direct interactions occur in parent involvement programs, teachers may study and try to understand families; and parents may attend workshops to hear and learn about teaching and school programs. Each group needs to be aware of the

importance of the other before they are able to use that knowledge to work together to assist the student.

Organizational theory helps to explain how students benefit when the home and school environments are structured to help students become productive learners. For each skill (from learning to tie a shoe to learning algebra) the authority figure (mother, father, or teacher) designs the task to provide the child with some important degree of shared control and likelihood of success, and structures the environment to permit ample opportunities for practice and recognition of success. The child's behavior and learning is guided by the way the task is designed and presented, the level of active participation by the child, the rewards or recognition that accompany performance, and the expectation that there will be a desired finished product (e.g. a social or academic skill). This perspective suggests that family and school environments will be successful if they understand and use the key manipulable structures that can promote student learning (Epstein, in press). The student's success will be enhanced if both family and school use principles of effective organization of learning opportunities.

The main opposing theories and the supplementary theories extend our understanding of the range of family-school connections in separate and overlapping spheres. The supplementary theories of interpersonal relations explain some of mechanisms that drive parents and teachers to reinforce or remove boundaries between their institutions. The theory of organizational effectiveness explains

why the characteristics of environments must be examined in addition to characteristics of individuals or interpersonal relations.

As we move toward a more comprehensive, integrated theory of family and school connections we will need to take into account the organizational and interpersonal characteristics of the two institutions -- the management of effective schools and families, and the roles and relationships of teachers, other school staff, parents, and students.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTRASTING THEORIES

3. Authority of Teachers and Parents

Underlying the contrasting theories of school and family relations are issues of responsibility and authority -- Who does what? Where? Who decides who does what? Who decides it was done satisfactorily?

Control. Schools, principals, or teachers can fully control the school organization or share control with parents, students, and others. Teachers can direct student learning with or without allowing or encouraging parents to assist, depending on the teachers' beliefs of how they teach best. However, teacher decisions are revised by the varied approaches of parents. Parents have different knowledge and histories, and some get involved on their own in their children's education and in the schools, regardless of the preferences for control by teachers.

Division of labor. Teachers and administrators may stress the separate skills and contributions of teachers and parents. They emphasize the specialization required in teaching and parenting to "cover" the school training and home training needed by children. Specialization requires expertise in a few well-defined tasks and the production of specific parts of a larger product -- in this case, the fully-educated student. Teachers who have been advised to "stick to the basics" restrict their attention to the academic skills needed by students. They may use tests to diagnose student needs or other methods to emphasize the different approaches in schools from families. This division of labor reflects the early theories of separate spheres of home and school responsibilties.

Or, educators may stress the overlap of labor for educating and socializing students. They promote the generalization of skills required in teaching and parenting to produce the educated student. When they "teach the whole child," teachers increase their attention to the child's learning, self-concept, aspirations, social skills, and development of talents -- some of the traditional responsibilities of parents. When teachers ask parents to help them focus on school skills with their children, they direct the parents' attention to the child's abilities and mastery of skills -- some of the teachers' traditional responsibilities.

Teachers and parents establish settings that are characterized either by sole or shared control over school learning and behavior, and by a strict or relaxed division of labor. A high degree of

control and high specialization restricts interaction between parents and teachers. Specialization can reduce responsiveness in education if the separation of responsibilities creates an attitude of "It's not my job," among teachers when students have problems with social skills, or among parents when students have learning problems.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTRASTING THEORIES

4. Respect for Teachers and Parents

A basic factor underlying each theory is the way society shows respect to parents and to teachers for their contributions to child development. When families and schools are viewed as <u>separate</u> organizations, parents receive respect and gratitude for their home training and child rearing, and teachers for their school lessons and educational programs. Teacher expertise is based on professional training and parental expertise is based on success in home management and child rearing. In this theory and in related practice, autonomy, authority, and respect of teachers and parents are <u>site specific</u>, based on the adults in each setting doing distinct jobs at home or at school.

When families and schools are viewed as <u>overlapping</u> organizations with shared responsibilities, respect is extended to parents and teachers who recognize the need to cooperate and collaborate to fulfill the shared obligations for the education and socialization of children throughout the school years. Each requires information

about the goals and the work of the other, and each assists the student to attain success in school. Authority and respect of parents and teachers are student specific, based on the adults' knowledge of and responses to the children who are their shared responsibilities.

When families and schools are viewed as sequential educational organizations, respect is extended to parents for their training and teaching during the infancy, toddler, and early preschool years, and then to teachers for assuming the major educational responsibilities during the school years. Teachers and administrators "take over" the education of the child and, in large part, direct and control the students' futures. Autonomy, authority, and respect of teachers and parents are stage specific, based on the successful education of children at different times in children's lives.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTRASTING THEORIES

5. Studying the Practices of Teachers and Responses of Parents and Students

From research completed over the past several years, we have some indications about how the different theoretical perspectives are represented in the actions and attitudes of teachers, parents and students. The philosophies and practices of teachers reflect the two main, opposing theories of school and family relations -- they reflect both the separate and the overlapping spheres of family and school responsibilities. For example, some teachers believed that

they could be effective only if they obtained parental cooperation and assistance on learning activities at home. In their classrooms, cooperation was high. These teachers made frequent requests for parental assistance to reinforce or improve student skills. They orchestrated actions in the overlapping family and school spheres of influence.

Other teachers believed that their professional status would be jeopardized if parents were involved in activities that are typically the teachers' responsibilities. In their classrooms, inter-institutional cooperation was low. These teachers made few overtures to parents and rarely asked them to help their children on learning activities at home. They maintained separate spheres of influence for the school and the family (Becker and Epstein, 1982; Epstein and Becker, 1982).

Surveys of teachers, principals, and parents show that:

o Teachers control the flow of information to parents. By limiting or reducing communications and collaborative activities, teachers reinforce the boundaries that separate the two institutions. By increasing communications, teachers acknowledge and build connections between institutions to focus on the common concern of teachers and parents -- a child who is also a student.

o Parents' reports did not reflect deep conflict and incompatibility between the schools and families. Rather, parents responded favorably to teachers' practices that stressed the cooperation of

schools and families. Frequent use by teachers of parent involvement resulted in parents' reports that they received more ideas about how to help their children at home, and knew more about the instructional programs than they did the previous year. Teachers who included the family in the children's education were recognized by parents for their efforts and were rated higher than other teachers on interpersonal and teaching skills (Epstein, 1986).

o Students' records suggested that schools were more effective when families and schools worked together with the student on basic skills. Students gained in reading skills from fall to spring when their teachers used frequent practices of parent involvement (Epstein, 1984). And students recognized the overlap and cooperation between school and family environments that occurred when teachers involved parents and parents responded (Epstein, 1982).

o Teachers who used parent involvement were seen as more "professional" by their principals (Epstein, 1985).

The research results on teachers' practices strongly support theories that assert the effectiveness of overlapping spheres of family and school influence.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTRASTING THEORIES

6. Improving the Status of Teachers

Recent reports about needed school reforms include recommendations for improving the professional status of teachers by upgrading

their income, prestige, responsibility, and leadership. Other recommendations involve revising the requirements and standards for certification and entry. Still others suggest instituting honors and awards to increase the community's respect for teachers. The types of recommendations reflect the principles of the contrasting theories of the importance of separate vs. overlapping spheres of school and family environments.

In one direction, educators are calling for increased standardization and bureaucratic control, with teachers receiving explicit directions about their responsibilities from school, district and state administrators. Here, the focus is on the process of administration. The aim is for more efficient teaching that results from the instructional leadership of the administrators who are ultimately responsible for the schools. This approach denies the importance of the family in the education of the child, and minimizes the importance of teacher autonomy and creativity in assisting students' learning. This direction exaggerates the separate roles of administrators, teachers, and parents, giving school administrators almost sole control of the design and direction of education. Under this scheme, teachers would be considered "professional" if they efficiently and competently executed the plans and lessons created by administrators.

In another direction, educators are pulling professionalism toward greater autonomy for teachers, with a focus on the process of teaching. The aim is for more expert teaching. Many believe that

more able people will be attracted to the teaching profession if they are given greater autonomy, and that more creative teachers will remain committed to their work if they are given greater control over the teaching process. This direction emphasizes the separate responsibilities of home and school and the unique status of teachers. It minimizes the part parents need to play in their children's education. Teachers would be considered professional if they inventively and expertly conduct plans and lessons that they create.

In a third direction, educators are seeking to increase professionalism through teacher and parent partnerships, with the focus on the students' process of learning. The emphasis is on responsive teaching. Many believe that teacher awareness of student needs and of family and community forces are measures of teacher professionalism, and that parent awareness of student needs, school programs, and the options and consequences of educational decisions for their children are measures of parent expertise. This directions emphasizes the overlapping responsibilities of the school and the home. It assumes that "professionalism" and "partnership" need not be contradictory. Teachers would be considered professional if they purposefully and successfully manage many educational resources, including parent involvement, to provide the best education for each child.

The available theories of family and school relations are each inadequate for guiding new improvements in the status of teachers.

An integration of elements from these different designs for teacher professionalism is required to make the best use of contributions from administrators, teachers, and parents in the education of children. The administrators' interest in the efficient functioning of the school cannot be denied. The teachers' interest in autonomous planning and creative teaching cannot be eliminated. And the parents' participation in their children's socialization and education cannot be ignored.

New Directions for an Integrated Theory of Family-School Relations

A life-course perspective (Elder and Rockwell, 1979) enables us to integrate useful strands from different theories of family and school relations and improve upon the weaknesses in the extant theories. A life-course perspective requires that research models pay attention to three characteristics in family-school relationships: History, Developmental considerations, and Change.

History

Four events in recent history help explain the movement from theories and practices that stress separation to those that stress partnership and overlap in family and school environments.

a. Increase in college attendance and completion of bachelor's degree.

b. Dr. Spock's guide to child rearing.

c. Federal programs for disadvantaged preschool children.

d. Increase in single parents, working mothers, and other changes in family structure.

These four factors have, over the past four to five decades, altered the nature and extent of family-school connections in this country. The events, singly and cumulatively, involved and continue to involve more parents in their children's education and to officially and publicly recognize parents as "teachers."

a. More mothers with college education and bachelor's degrees. The number of U. S. high school students who attend and graduate from college has increased dramatically over the past 40 years. This increase has been especially dramatic for women. Fewer than 20 percent of bachelor's degrees were earned by women prior to 1950 (and most of these were in the field of education), but fully half of the earned bachelor's degrees in 1980 were awarded to women in many fields (Bureau of the Census, 1984). As these better-educated women became mothers, their education affected their interactions with teachers. Whereas most mothers were once less educated than the college-trained teachers, most mothers are now attending some college and are gaining equal status with their children's teachers.

b. Baby and Child Care. Dr. Spock's (1950) influential and popular book increased the number of parents who became knowledgeable and involved in the education of their infants and toddlers. The book, and others on child care that followed, offered sensible

information to all parents about the importance of home environments for children's learning -- information that had previously been known to few. Although the book was not very useful in its discussions about older children and had little to say about school, it increased parents' awareness and experience with their children as young learners. The book and the parental actions that it fostered primed parents for the next phase of their children's lives -- school.

c. Federal programs for disadvantaged preschool children. In the 1960's, the Headstart and other federally sponsored programs for preschoolers recognized that parents, especially economically-disadvantaged parents, needed the help of educators to prepare their preschool children for regular school to break the cycle of school failures that the children were facing. More importantly, the preschools recognized that despite the lack of advanced education of many mothers, the schools needed their involvement, interest and understanding -- involvement in the classroom as volunteers and paid aides, at home as tutors, and at school on governing boards -- to maximize student success. Parent involvement was not devised for ease or efficiency in operating the schools. Rather, the preschool programs officially recognized and operationalized connections between schools and families to try to improve both family and school organizations for the education and socialization of children (Valentine and Stark, 1979).

In the same decade, Follow-Through programs forced schools to recognize the continued importance of parents as educators beyond the preschool years (Gordon, Olmstead, Rubin, and True, 1979). And, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-172) of 1975 brought teachers and parents together to discuss the educational program of each child. This official, federal attention to parents continued in the Title 1 (ESEA) and Chapter 1 (ECIA) legislation (Hobson, 1979).

The federal programs put parent involvement on the agendas of the local schools (Keesling and Melaragno, 1981). Schools could not easily limit parent involvement to the parents of children in federally sponsored programs, so parents of all children, at all grade levels -- including less-educated or less-economically advantaged parents -- became more involved with their children's teachers and schooling.

d. Changing family structures. In the past decade, two key changes in family structure have dramatically affected family and school relations. These are the increase in the number of single parents and the number of mothers who have school-aged children and who work outside the home.

Mothers who work outside the home need to manage the care and schooling of their children with more exactitude than mothers who work at home. They must arrange how their children are cared for before and after school, on school holidays, or during illness. This attention to the needs of the child has increased the concern

of working mothers about the quality of schooling and after-school services. Although working mothers and single parents do not volunteer to help out at the school building as much as other mothers, research shows that they are as interested as other mothers in their children's education and spend as much or more time helping their children at home (Epstein, 1983).

Some teachers maintain their traditional beliefs about the prevalence and benefits of two-parent homes in which the mothers work at home. Their overt or subtle attitudes and actions may have negative consequences for children from these differently structured families and for single parents' and working mothers' interactions with teachers.

Increasingly, schools have had to replace traditional images of family life and regular patterns of communication with mothers at home with new images and new patterns of communication to accommodate the lives and the needs of different types of families. Some schools have made these adjustments fully to help all families, however structured, to function successfully in their interactions with schools. Other schools have changed little in their expectations or communications with families, despite the changes in families.

Thus historical changes have occurred in family education, marital status, occupational patterns, awareness of the importance of infancy and early childhood, and federal support for parent involvement in children's education. These changes have created

more interest in theories of overlapping family and school environments. But the theoretical models of family-school relations have not incorporated the importance of history.

Developmental Considerations

Schools' interactions with families about their children will fit the age, grade level, and level of learning readiness and needs of the child. This suggests that schools will be more like families for young students, with closer direct ties between teachers and parents of preschool and early elementary students. Schools may become increasingly impersonal through the high school years, preparing students for their interactions in adulthood with other formal organizations in government, in work, and in society. But, even through high school, schools will vary in the extent they communicate with and involve parents and treat students personally and family-like.

The evidence is strong in research and practice that persistent or successful students establish close relations and family-like ties to influential teachers in high school. We do not yet know, however, the type and degree of personal vs. impersonal relations that lead to maximum learning and development, or the adjustments needed over the school years to create the appropriate personal and impersonal environments that will prepare students for adult interactions in business and government. But theories of family-school relations must help predict and explain changes along a developmental time line that accounts for student age, stage of development, and family and school characteristics.

Change

Families and schools are ever-changing. Families change as the members mature and develop new skills, knowledge, contacts, and patterns of social interaction. A family builds a changing history of relationships with schools for each child in attendance. Parents' experiences with teachers, school activities, and the children's accumulated successes and failures affect the family and school contacts about each child and may influence the interactions about the next child to attend the school. Interactions with one school affect the family's knowledge and attitudes in dealing with new schools that the child enters.

Schools change as the members come and go. New students enter yearly; new combinations of students enter classes; and new teachers and administrators join the staff. The talents, perspectives, and leadership of the school change with the maturity and stability of the staff. As teachers and administrators gain experience and advanced training, they increase their abilities to consider complex educational issues, practices, and goals. Teachers and administrators who become aware of their abilities and more secure in their school environment may be more understanding and open to parental requests and to parental assistance. The schools build a changing history of relationships with families for each child and each group of children in attendance. The early interactions can affect later interactions between schools and families. Theories of family-school relations must account for the forces of change that may operate on the family and school organizations and their members.

Summary: Adding a Life-Course Perspective to Theories of Family-School Relations

The contrasting theoretical perspectives can be better understood be considering historical, developmental, and dynamic conditions in families and in schools. The early theories that emphasized separate spheres of family and school life focused on the effective organization of these institutions at a time when the professional status of teachers was strong. The place for mothers was in the home. Schools were in charge of children and there was little reason to challenge their ability to do their job. In many cases, immigrant parents or parents who had little education did not question the school's success with students, even if their own children were poorly served, failing, or dropping out of school.

Most mothers did not attend college, whereas almost all teachers did. Ambitious, bright women who wanted to work became teachers. Their education earned them professional status. In contrast, most mothers did not seek jobs outside the home. Large families and few labor-saving household appliances gave mothers plenty to do at home.

The characteristics of families, schools, and teachers have changed. Many mothers attend and graduate from college and are at least equal to teachers in their education. Families are smaller, more mothers work, and many are in professional fields besides teaching. There is less agreement now than in the past about what a mother is "supposed to do" at home and away from home. Many fathers are now more involved in child care, child rearing, and their

children's education. And, there is an increasing number of single parents and working mothers who feel their responsibilities for their children keenly.

Parents who used to be silent or submissive -- non-English speaking parents, less-educated and economically-disadvantaged parents, and parents of children who are educationally slower than average or mildly or severely handicapped mentally or physically -- are now changing their relationships with the schools and seeking better education for their children. Many have been socialized or politicized in their experiences with federally sponsored preschool programs to expect schools to be responsive to their children's needs and accountable to the public. Parents whose children have special problems or require special education are now seeking and expecting the schools to provide assistance and strong educational programs for their children.

The annual Gallup polls now collect the public's ratings of the schools. Schools are more vulnerable to criticism if they do not provide a basic education to all children. They are now held accountable for their successes and failures by the taxpayers, including parents. Schools have become more aware of the need to maintain good public relations with the community. Educators increasingly recognize the enormous difficulty of educating all students, and the need to reach out to obtain help from parents, community agencies, businesses, and universities. These groups, previously purposely excluded from the schools, are seen now as

having a stake in better educational programs and therefore a role in providing and improving education.

Changing times require changing theories. School and family relationships look different at different time periods. It is not surprising, then, to see a restructuring of theories from inter-institutional separation to cooperation between schools and families to accommodate the social changes that have affected each organization. And it becomes clear that an integrated theory of family-school relations should account for the processes of development and change that are recognized in a life course perspective.

Over time, the theoretical perspectives have become increasing complex, moving from early assumptions about beneficial separation to the later inter-institutional and ecological theories of imperative connections of families and schools. But, the existing theories omit attention to time, and to the importance of change and mutual influence of families and schools on each other. Because relationships are not stagnant, a comprehensive theory must attend to how school and family relations are affected by the change in the knowledge and experiences of the key participants -- teachers, parents, and students.

A New Model for Family-School Relations

Motivation to learn and successful learning by students is a process of social interaction, but our theories have not been

explicit enough about how social interaction involves members in the multiple environments that educate and socialize children. Learning occurs in the context of social relationships (Bossert, 1979), but not only in school contexts. For children, the home and school are the two major, simultaneous educating and socializing environments.

School, classroom, and family contexts have, from time to time, been considered in concert (Leichter,1974). But theories of family-school relations have not given adequate attention to the connections between and among the organizations and the individuals in producing effective learning by the student. Current theories do not attend to the changing relationships and accumulated experiences of the organizations, members, and students that, over time, affect student behavior and achievements.

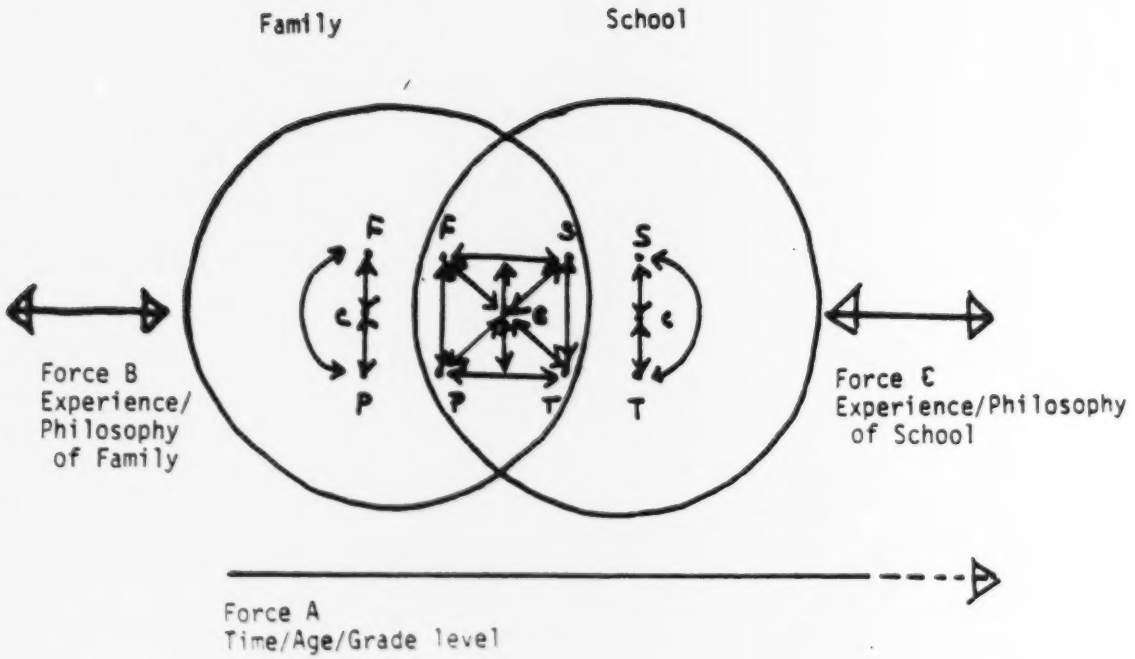
Figure 1 depicts the critical components of a new theoretical model of family and school relations.

External structure. The external structure consists of overlapping or non-overlapping spheres of influence of the two environments. The degree of overlap is controlled by two forces -- time and experience. These assume that it is important to account for the time needed to build and change family-school relations, and the changes in family and school relations that occur as children get older, as families become more experienced with schools, and as teachers become more experienced with families.

FIGURE 1

Model of Overlapping Spheres of Influence

in Families and Schools



F = Family
S = School
C = Child
P = Parent
T = Teacher

Force A represents the developmental line for students from birth through high school (or beyond) that registers the changes in characteristics and needs of students as they develop from infants to young adults. In infancy the spheres may be separate. The child first "attends" home. For the child, the family is, initially, the key educating environment. Later, in a regular pattern, the spheres overlap considerably for the the child and family when the child "attends" home and school. There will be, then, a "typical" or expected pattern of separation or overlap at different times during a child's life based on the age of the child, the stage or level of education, and the historic period when the child is in school.

Children are connected to the <u>same families</u> but <u>different teachers</u> throughout their school years. The continuation of home environment and discontinuous sequence of school and classroom environments requires theories of family and school relations to account for changes that occur from year to year as the child enters each new teacher's classroom.

Family and school spheres will overlap most for most children during the preschool and early elementary grades. But the overlap will vary for children at all grade levels because of varying philosophies, policies, and practices and pressures of parents, teachers, or both. These are accounted for by Force B and Force C -- measures of the experiences of and pressures on family and school members. The forces push together or pull apart the spheres to produce more or less overlap of family and school actions and interactions all along the developmental and historic time lines.

For example, during the child's infancy the family and school spheres may overlap for the parents, -- indirectly, in parents' memories and actions, or directly, in parents' uses of guide books or advice from educators or others. When parents maintain interest and involvement in their children's schooling (Force B), they create greater overlap of the family and school spheres than would be expected on the average. When teachers make parents part of their regular teaching practice (Force C), they force greater overlap than would be expected from the regular patterns that develop along the developmental time line (Force A).

Time alone, or increasing age, does not make parents more knowledgeable about how to help their children with particular school problems. Indeed, our research shows that it currently works the other way -- the older the child (after grade 1), the less overlap in the two environments and the less the parent feels able to help the child in school (Becker and Epstein, 1982; Epstein, 1986). In our Figure, if we included only Force A, we would see separate family and school spheres in infancy, increasing overlap during the preschool years and grade 1, and an increasing separation of spheres from grades 2 or 3 on for most familes and schools.

Forces B and C change the typical pattern to create more or less overlap for some families and schools at all grade levels because of school or family practices. If teachers wanted to change the typical patterns of increasing separation of families and schools for older students, the teachers would have to change their daily

practices to increase interaction with (and ideas and advice to) parents of upper elementary and secondary school children. This also would require that the older students change their reactions to and use of assistance from parents. Each new teacher contributes to a dynamic pattern of family-school relationships and affects the overlap or separations of the environments.

Internal Structure. The internal structure of Figure 1 shows interpersonal relationships and influence patterns. It includes two levels of interaction between organizations and between individuals. Family (F) and school (S) connections, parent (P) and teacher (T) connections, and the child's (C) central place are considered in these patterns of interaction and represented in this model.

The multi-directional arrows assume that children interact with and are influenced by their families and by changes in their families that are imposed by schools. Children interact with and are influenced by schools and by the changes in schools that are imposed by families. School policies (the school organization) and teachers' practices and attitudes (the individuals in that organization) are affected by and have effects on family policies (the family organization) and parents' practices and attitudes (the individuals in that organization). The school and the family organizations, and teachers and parents as individuals, affect the child as a member of the family (in the role of son/daughter/sibling) and as a member of the school (in the role of student, friend, athlete, leader). The interactions between and among

individuals and groups in the two settings may have important effects on students' success or failure in school, parents' skills, family interactions, teachers' roles and responsibilities, the operations of the school and the family, and on other family-school relations. These changing multilevel interactions and influences can be translated into standard nonrecursive, longitudinal models of effects of environmental and individual influence on student learning and development.

The internal relationships occur at all times, and are influenced by the time line (force A) and by the actions and attitudes that are affected by the experiences and decisions of teachers and parents (Forces B and C) that alter the overlap or the distance between family and school organizations and members. Children's learning and development are affected by the history of experiences of the students, their parents, and their teachers (Forces A, B, and C), especially as these events involve the interactions and interdependence of the teachers and parents on issues concerning the child.

A life course approach to studying the influence of families and schools on student motivation and learning energizes an integrated theory of family and school relations. As represented in Figure 1, a life-course approach enables us to take into account the continuous change that occurs in families and schools and to recognize the importance of accumulated knowledge and experiences of parents, teachers and students. Our model recognizes the interlocking histories of the institutions and the individuals in each, and the

causal connections between early activities and experiences and later motivation, attitudes, and learning. The integrated theory suggests many new hypotheses that should be tested in studies of family and school relations and their effects. We offer a few examples of these:

- Cooperating and collaborating schools and families will be more effective organizations,
- When the division of labor between teacher and parent is severe and distinct, when the two have authority over different aspects of the child's development, parents and teachers will interact less on issues concerning the child.
- When the school organization includes the family as an essential part of the child's educational program, there will be greater respect of parents by teachers and of teachers by parents.
- Teachers who act as managers of multiple instructional resources, including parents, will be more effective teachers,
- School and family partnerships will increase teachers' autonomy, professional status, and respect in the community.
- Teachers at all levels of schooling can influence the degree to which parents understand and use school-like approaches to learning at home.

- Parents who are involved as knowledgeable partners in their child's continuing education will be more effective parents.
- School policies that support parents will reduce parental stress in their interactions with their children about school work.
- Increasing parent knowledge about how to help their children will increase the competence parents feel about their roles as parents, teachers, and advisors to their children.
- Over time, increasing parents' repertories of skills of how to help their children will increase their confidence about interacting with their children on schoolwork, their substantive communications with their children, and their communications with the school.
- In families with more than one child, the socialization of parents by the schools over the 12 school years has implications for the parents' actions and interactions with their younger children.
- Increasing parents' knowledge of school instructional programs and class lessons should increase the effectiveness and cohesiveness of the family group.
- Students whose teachers and parents are working together will be more <u>effective students</u>, academically and socially.

- o More interaction, direct or indirect, between parents and techers will have positive effects on the child's learning and development (academic, personal, social, and emotional growth).

- o If the parent's skills are changed by the teachers' practices of parent involvement, then the students' skills and attitudes should be positively affected.

- o Children may increase their esteem for parents who are able to assist them.

- o If parents are involved in their children's education by teachers each year, parent-child interaction should be maintained and parental influence on children should be stronger, longer, even as peer influence increases. Children may continue to use parents as informers, helpers, and advocates in their school experiences if the parents are kept aware of grade-specific issues of importance.

These preliminary hypotheses require research on the effects of changing policies and practices of parent involvement.

Overlap of Family and School Spheres

The proposed model of overlapping spheres assumes that there are mutual interests and influences of families and schools that can be more or less successfully promoted by the policies of the organiza-

tions and the actions and attitudes of the individuals in those organizations. Although there are important differences between schools and families (Dreeben, 1968), we need to recognize also the important similarities, overlap in goals and responsibilities, and mutual influence of the two major environments which simultaneously affect children's learning and development. We look next at some important ways in which school and family environments and interests overlap.

Simultaneous Influence

The school has major influences on the family. There are numerous short-term, daily influences of schools on families. School assignments, notices, and events can influence discussions and activities at home. There are also long-term effects on family understanding of school programs. Schools influence families' expectations for their children at the current school and at the next levels of schooling. In families with several children, schools influence what families expect from schools for their younger children. Schools can influence the level of success of students in ways that dramatically affect family relations through and after high school, and that affect financial support and financial security over the life course of parents and students.

Schools can inform families about the skills that are expected at each grade level, and how to their children master required and advanced skills. Many families are influenced to make their homes "school-like" to maximize student learning. On their own or with

directions from teachers, they duplicate the school in ways that increase the probability of students' school success.

Families have major influence on schools. In the short term, families direct schools' or teachers' attention to students' daily problems and successes, health and illness, moods and accomplishments. In the long term, families can influence changes and improvements in the school academic and non-academic programs, can influence teachers' understanding and appreciation of families, and can create new ways for schools to relate to parents.

Families are often the only source of influence on the amount of attention that schools give to individual students. In response to family pressures, many schools and teachers have made their classrooms increasingly "family-like" to maximize learning and to improve student attitudes.

The overlap is a critical component in the proposed theory. We look next at some facts of school-like families and family-like schools to provide background to encourage new research on family and school connections.

Uniform vs. Personal Standards and Treatments

Earlier theories asserted that schools treat students equitably, judging students by universal standards and basing rewards on what they do (achievements), not on who they are (ascriptions). In contrast, families are said to treat children individually, judging them by personal standards and special relationships, basing rewards

and affection on their individual growth and improvement or on their membership in the family, not on achievements relative to other children. These "pure" models of different institutional attitudes and functions are not very accurate portrayals of how schools and families promote successful students and motivate students toward success in school.

The distinction between universalistic and particularistic treatments of students has been blurred in schools that are more personal and individualized environments and in families that are more aware of the importance of schooling and the components of standard curricula.

School-like families

Some parents run "school-like" homes. They know how to help their children in schoolwork and take every opportunity to do so. They are cognizant of the overlap of the school and family spheres. Other parents do not know how to help without guidance and leadership from teachers. They operate their homes without awareness of the overlap of home and school.

The school-like families often have academic schedules for learning for their children from infancy on, with books and colors, shapes and sizes, music and art part of their "school-like" curricula. These families are being directed by an "absentee" or remembered teacher, or by contempory educational sources. The parents use their accumulated knowledge and memories of school or

learn techniques from child-rearing or parenting guides to conduct a home curriculum that readies their children for school.

Some parents not only create school-like tasks for their children and reward their children for success, but also match the task to the child's level of ability and involve the children in active learning and not passive listening. These parents translate not only the curriculum of the school into home tasks, but also the principles of effective organization, teaching, and learning (Rich and Jones, 1977). We have assumed that this is the family influencing the young child, but in fact it is the images of school or teachers in absentia influencing the family to influence the child.

Students achievement and motivation to learn are influenced by the family and the school, even prior to the child's entry to school. The family's influence on learning may be due to parents' knowledge about what schools and teachers believe is important. Parents have more or less ability to translate their recollections and understandings about school into positive family practices that promote learning.

Although most parents accept and love their children for their unique qualities and lineal connections, many families reward their children for real and objective accomplishments, as teachers do. Many families judge their children on standard criteria and reward their children as they learn the "basic skills" (from learning to walk to learning to read) and as they acquire social skills and advanced academic skills or other talents. They place more emphasis than other families on their children's place in a status hierarchy.

Students increasingly learn that rules govern the behavior of all members of the school, that each child is expected to fill the role of "student," and that there are official rewards and sanctions for performances and improvement. Some families, although small, operate quite like schools -- children learn rules that govern the behavior of family members, learn that they fill roles and responsibilities as son or daughter, brother or sister, and learn that rewards and sanctions are issued on fair and predictable bases.

Family-like Schools.

Teachers vary in their recognition and use of the overlap in family and school spheres of influence.

Some schools make their students feel part of a "school family" that looks out for their interests and provides unique experiences for each child. Schools may relax or unstandardize their rules, vary the students' roles, and alter the reward system to be more responsive to the student and to be more like families.

Particularistic treatment, associated with family relations, implies a degree of favoritism or special attention for the unique and endearing qualities of individuals. This kind of treatment occurs at school too, with some students receiving family-like treatment, attention, and affection from teachers.

Although schools do impose some uniform standards for all students to follow (e.g. attendance regulations, graduation requirements, formal codes for dress or conduct), students' grades and

other rewards are often tied to the personal relationships of the student and teacher. The daily events and experiences that are the most important motivators may have little to do with standardized evaluation and a great deal to do with personal, individual attention.

Schools vary on the dimension of uniform vs. special standards. Some schools recognize and reward only students who are in the top groups or tracks, or who get the highest grades. Other schools reward students for personal progress and improvement in achievement. These schools deal with students as individuals, more as parents do. They place less emphasis on the students' place in a status hierarchy.

It has been argued that the separation of schools and families benefits students because the impersonal treatment in schools prepares students for the kinds of impersonal power relationships they will experience as adults in the workplace and in other social settings (Dreeben, 1968; Hamilton, 1983). Although students will need to deal successfully with impersonal power relationships in the business world, more learning during the school years may occur when close personal relations are developed between teachers and students, and between teachers and parents. Presently, brighter students often are given various opportunities to interact on friendly and preferential terms with teachers. Slower students often experience less personal treatment, which may further reduce their motivation to come to school to learn.

Overlapping Concerns with Student Learning and Development

Schools and families have many mutual interests and concerns about student learning and development.

Teachers have a stake in the child's manners, behavior, and treatment of others, just as they have a stake in the student's academic skills and improvement. Parents have a stake in the child's mastery of basic skills and experiences with advanced skills, just as they care about the child's social and emotional skills and development.

Sometimes, what we expect the family to do, must be done by the schools. For example, through childhood and adolescence families are supposed to teach their children about their cultural backgrounds, nurture their development, reward success, and redirect failure. Yet, the multi-cultural programs and intergroup projects in many schools can be as or more effective than many families in nurturing both self-respect among students and appreciation of others' backgrounds. Some schools promote students' self-confidence and feelings of worth as much or more than some families.

Parents are expected to serve as buffers, liaisons, and advocates for their children, managing the interactions that occur between the small family unit and the larger school bureaucracy. They may protect the child's rights to programs and services, and monitor school policies in the child's interest. But, many families neither understand nor perform these responsibilities well. In many

schools, administrators, counselors, and teachers may be more active than family members in assisting the child to obtain needed special services and opportunities.

Sometimes, what we expect the school to do, the family may do better. Schools are supposed to influence the development of independence in students because teachers cannot give students frequent individual attention, and so students must assume responsibilities for good work and behavior. But some schools foster the dependence of the child on the teacher, while some families of all socioeconomic backgrounds influence independence as much or more than schools do -- depending on their goals for child behavior and the practices that require and reward independent behavior from their children.

Time in family and school environments

The child is either in school or out. Some cite figures to show how many hours students spend in school (e.g. Fifteen thousand hours, by Rutter and associates, 1979). Others cite the time that students are not in school and are under the influence of the family, community, media, churches, camps, daycare programs, or part-time employers. At least 16 hours per school day plus weekends and vacations are out-of-school time.

The seemingly dramatic dichotomy of in/out of school is distorted by the degree of overlap in environments. For example, when the

student is in school, the family's influence may still be at work. A student knows if a parent knows what is happening in school, what the student is learning, and how he/she is expected to behave. Efforts at home on school work may affect the student's attention and level of readiness for new and more difficult work in school.

Similarly, when the student is at home, the school's influence on the child may be still at work. At home, many students know how a teacher expects homework to be completed, and students often relate to daily events in terms of school experiences.

Time in and out of school, then, is not "pure" school or family time. Time in school is influenced by the family and other sources. Time out of school is influenced by teachers, school, and other educational programs. Learning occurs in school and out of school in the environments designed by parents and by teachers. The degree of overlap in the two environments in matters about schoolwork influences the students' attention, motivation, and learning.

Summary: Family-like Schools and School-like Families

Schools and families vary on the dimensions that are supposed to distinguish family and school treatments and attention to children. There are family-like schools and school-like families, as well as schools and families that are more traditional in their approaches to education and socialization.

Some children view the school as an extended family. Describing the principal, one youngster said, "He's the daddy for the school," (Shedlin, 1986). In another example, a teacher being honored for thirty years of service and excellence is pictured in the newspaper sitting, smiling, grandmotherly, with the arms of two children around her (Baltimore Sun, March 5, 1986).

As large organizations, schools make different demands on students than do families, but schools vary in their emphasis on bureaucratic vs. personal relations with students. Families vary in their emphases on strict or lenient regulations and on more or less warmth and closeness in their relationships.

Some parents maintain a high level of authority and control over their children's education. These parents are vigilant about school programs and procedures, are knowledgeable about school policies and channels of communication, are at least equal in education or competence with the teachers in recognizing important educational experiences for their children. Their children enter school with a familiarity for school-like activities, because they were prepared for school at home from infancy to their preschool years. Middle class homes or homes with middle class values are said to be congruent with the schools in style and substance. A high degree of overlap between family and school environments, interests and actions is assumed.

Other parents relinquish their control over their children's education to the school. These parents appear unconcerned with or

unaware of school programs or policies. They may fear interactions with the schools and with teachers. It has been assumed that lower class parents or parents with a laissez-faire attitude about their children's education will make a more total transfer of authority for the education of their children to the teacher because of their own unfamiliarity, lack of success, or unconcern with school practices. These families are said to have homes that are incongruent with schools (Lightfoot, 1979). A low degree of overlap between family and school environments, interests and actions is assumed.

Some have suggested that the schools and these families have different goals for the children, but recent research suggests that although parents' educational backgrounds differ, both middle- and low-income parents have similar goals as the school for their children's education (Epstein, 1986).

The main differences among parents are:

a) their knowledge of how to help their children at home,

b) their beliefs that the teachers want them to assist the children, and

c) the degree of guidance from their children's teachers in how and on what to help their children at home.

These factors create more or less school-like families.

If teachers do not annually upgrade parents' understanding and involvement of school practices, the spheres of family and school environments and influence on student learning slide further apart. The lack of guidance of parents by teachers increases the discrepancy between families that continue to be involved on their own with their children's education and families who do not know how to help their children in school work at home. This increases the variation in school-like families. The impact on children's learning, progress, and aspirations due to greater or less overlap of environments can be dramatic. If teachers do not utilize the home as an ally of the school, part of the child's total educational and socializing environment that consists of the interactions between the school and the family is ignored.

The depth, complexity, and variation in overlap of school and family environments (as suggested by school-like families and family-like schools), and the influence the environments and individuals have on each other, suggest many hypotheses for studies of family-school structures, processes, and effects. We offer a few examples here:

- Families influence student success in school to the degree that they reproduce school attitudes and behaviors at home with their children.

- Schools influence student success to the extent that they reproduce family-like attention and respect for the individual child.

- More effective schools build more personal relationships among teachers, students, and parents to promote student learning.

- Students will be more successful in schools where teachers offer family-like attention to individuals.

- Greater "distance" between teacher and student or teacher and parent may lead to less effective schools and families.

- Trust, respect, and personal attachments to teachers (similar to the attachments students build at home with parents) are needed to maximize motivation in the classroom. This is especially true for elementary and middle school students, but remains true (as in mentor relationships) through high school and beyond.

- A high degree of universalism in the parents' evaluations of their children and a systematic program to assist and encourage the child in school work at home will mean greater success for the child in school.

- A high degree of particularistic appreciation of children and plans for individualized improvement of children's skills will mean greater success for the child in school.

- There is an optimal mix of universalistic and particularistic treatment in schools and families to maximize student motivation, learning, and success in school.

- Teachers who use practices of parent involvement can increase the number of parents who understand school goals and programs and who create opportunities for learning and improvement at home.

Conclusion

The changing theories and the variations in school and family practices show clearly that parent involvement is a manipulable variable that can be designed to increase school effectiveness and to improve student success in school. Over the last several decades, theories of family-school relations have been revised as the social conditions of schools and families changed. Parent involvement and teacher-parent cooperation and communication has increased over that time.

The proposed model of family-school relations shows that -- at any time, in any school, and in any family -- parent involvement is a variable that can be increased or decreased by teachers, administrators, parents, and students. Each member of the school and family organizations can act to include or exclude parents from their children's education. Teaching practice is likely to continue to reflect the opposing theories of family-school relations, ranging from clearly separate families and schools to highly overlapping spheres of family and school influence.

The integrated theory proposed in this paper imposes a life-course perspective on earlier models of family-school relations. The new approach aims to:

1. Extend studies of family effects over the life span by intensifying attention to the interplay of family and school environments during that part of the parents and children's lives when the children are in school.

2. Extend studies of school effects and school processes by intensifying attention to the total learning environment of children including the home, and by examining the implications of this extension for teachers' roles.

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